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New York

President:	Mrs. Alvear Valenzuela	(Chile)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Benin	Mr. Adechi
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Holliday

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053)

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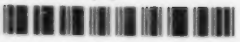

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mali, Mexico, Monaco, Myanmar, Norway, Sierra Leone, the Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda and Ukraine, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mrs. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Executive Director of UNICEF to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2003/1053, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

As another measure to optimize the use of our time in order to allow as many delegations as possible to take the floor, I shall not individually invite speakers to take seats at the table or invite them to resume their seats on the side. When a speaker is taking the floor, the Conference Officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table. I thank members in advance for their understanding and cooperation.

Before giving the floor to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, I should like to announce that, in relation to this debate, a brief video about the suffering and pain of children in armed conflict will be shown. The video was produced by War Child Canada, and I thank them for their contribution.

A video was projected on screen.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretariat for its cooperation.

Now that we have seen the video, I shall give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict. Mr. Olara Otunnu has the floor.

Mr. Otunnu: Madam President, thank you for being here today and for presiding personally over this

meeting of the Security Council. We appreciate enormously your personal commitment and the leadership of the delegation of Chile, which has been demonstrated within the United Nations and within the Organization of American States, and by you personally in the context of the Human Security Network. I thank you for being here today.

The struggle to ensure the protection, rights and well-being of children exposed to armed conflict has reached a watershed moment. A few years ago, the Security Council placed this issue on its agenda. We have come a long way since then. The developments, most of them in the realms of advocacy, development of standards and innovative initiatives, represent significant and concrete progress.

Sadly, in spite of these advances, I have to report that on the ground the general situation for children remains grave and unacceptable. Parties to conflicts continue to violate with impunity the rights of children. This is a cruel dichotomy, and herein lies the imperative for the era of application: a purposeful and concerted response.

Today the international community possesses, as never before, the means and collective influence to ensure compliance and protection. The challenge is that of will and choice. The Security Council must lead the way in taking measures that will create a critical mass, measures that are capable of making the era of application a reality for children exposed to war.

I should like to use this occasion to highlight several preoccupations for your consideration and action. Of particular importance is the need to establish a systematic and coordinated monitoring and reporting mechanism. This is indispensable. The Secretary-General's report before you (S/2003/1053) puts forth a set of proposals designed to serve as a basis for broad consultations on this issue among all stakeholders.

The impact of armed conflict on children takes grave and multiple forms. Children are killed, maimed, raped, abducted, denied humanitarian access, robbed of their birthright through the plunder of natural resources and used as child soldiers. All these children are victims of armed conflict. All these children look to the Security Council for protection.

A monitoring and reporting mechanism is of little value unless it leads to action, unless the information compiled can serve as triggers for action. In this regard, the Security Council must lead the way. It is the most important destination for action because of its primary responsibility for peace and security.

After careful monitoring, compilation and vetting, the Secretary-General has presented to the Council comprehensive and universal lists of parties to conflicts that continue to recruit and exploit children as child soldiers. Annex I of the Secretary-General's report names some 32 parties in six situations on the agenda of the Council, while annex II lists 22 parties in nine situations that are not on the Council's agenda. You now have before you, Madam President, the information necessary for action. At this watershed moment, I urge you to respond to the lists with concrete action, action commensurate with the gravity and scope of the violations in question.

Much effort is being deployed to develop United Nations response and innovations on the ground. I have to emphasize that effective response also requires increased political and material support for field programmes. I should like to pay special tribute to United Nations field teams and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for their indispensable contribution. In this connection, the leadership of my good colleague Carol Bellamy and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and that of Jean-Marie Guéhenno and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) have been especially invaluable.

United Nations agencies must assume particular responsibility for mainstreaming this issue. The time has come for United Nations agencies and their governing bodies, where appropriate, to translate their commitment to this agenda into concrete and systematic mainstreaming projects within their respective institutions. This should be measured in terms of priority setting, resource allocation and programming for the benefit of children affected by armed conflict. We must ensure, after the progress that has been made, that from now on the protection and rehabilitation of children are systematically incorporated into all stages of peace processes.

Regional and subregional organizations have a significant contribution to make to the realization of an era of application. The United Nations should encourage and cooperate with those organizations in their efforts to strengthen their advocacy and programme activities. In this connection, I particularly welcome the recent adoption of guidelines on children

in armed conflict by the European Union and the adoption by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of a peer review framework on the protection of children.

In order to build a viable regime of protection on the ground, international actors need to support and reinforce local efforts. In particular, we need to do much more to strengthen the capacities of defenders of children who are labouring at the very front line of this struggle: national institutions and local and subregional civil society networks for advocacy, protection and rehabilitation. In the same spirit, I believe that we should support local communities in their efforts to reclaim and strengthen indigenous cultural norms that have traditionally provided for the protection of children and women in times of war.

The ending of armed conflicts is the beginning of salvation for war-affected children everywhere. That is why greater and more concerted efforts should be deployed to end ongoing conflicts and address the key factors that facilitate the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts. That is also why we should, on this occasion, particularly rejoice with the children of Burundi, Liberia, Sri Lanka and Sudan, for whom the prospects of peace at last — definitive peace — bring unbelievable relief.

Since I will be circulating the full text of my remarks, I wish to conclude by saying that I know that the Security Council must always take into account and balance various important factors before taking any action, but I hope that, at this watershed moment, the best interests of children — our children — will trump all other considerations. On them, after all, depend the prospects for future peace and progress in all our societies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for his kind words addressed to me.

I now call on the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Carol Bellamy.

Ms. Bellamy: I, too, am quite pleased to join the Council today. I regret that I will not be able to remain for the entire discussion, as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Governing Board is presently also in session and I must return to its deliberations, but I appreciate the opportunity to be here. Let me also echo the words of my colleague Olara Otunnu in expressing our appreciation, Madame, for your personal as well as professional commitment on these issues.

I should like to begin by saying that UNICEF is deeply heartened by the Council's ongoing concern with the violations of the rights of children in armed conflict. I would also take this opportunity to commend Olara Otunnu, in particular, for his work in helping to draw global attention to these outrages.

As the past year has demonstrated, however, our efforts so far have fallen short of what is required. One example of our failure to protect children from the ravages of war is the reality we encounter in areas where humanitarian access has been denied. During the siege of Monrovia, the inability of the humanitarian community to gain access led to the unnecessary suffering of children and women. South-Eastern Afghanistan and the Darfur region of Sudan also illustrate the life-threatening consequences when access to children and women in need is denied.

In my travels, I have often witnessed the horrific impact of war on children. We can only begin to imagine — and I think the film captured some of it — how it must feel for a child to experience the fear and the uncertainty that come with the threat of war, the horror of war and the long aftermath, when schools are closed, routines of daily life are destroyed and children must try to cope with the loss of family, homes and community.

The report of the Secretary-General attempts to bring home the reality of what is happening. The numbers speak for themselves. We know, for example, that in Liberia there are an estimated 15,000 child soldiers, some of whom have been in the fighting forces for many years. A recent survey in Sierra Leone indicated that 17 per cent of displaced households reported sexual assaults, including rape, torture and sexual slavery. In mid-2003, there were 82 countries affected to some degree by landmines and/or unexploded ordnance, of which only 45 are States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Another devastating consequence of today's wars is that they create and exacerbate conditions that lead to HIV/AIDS. Women and girls are often left so destitute that trading sex for survival becomes the only

option for many. Other conditions, such as the disintegration of communities, displacement, the separation of children from their families, rape and sexual violence, and the destruction of schools and health services also fuel the spread of HIV/AIDS.

I am pleased to report that UNICEF is operational on the front lines every day. We are there before, during and — where there is success — after conflict, assisting with our colleagues in protecting and helping children. We do this with our many United Nations and non-governmental organization partners.

Child soldiers tend to be the face of children and armed conflict, but there are many other ways in which the rights of children are violated during armed conflict. For example, I recently returned from travel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where I saw first hand — particularly in the eastern part of the country — the devastating impact of sexual violence. Girls, and sometimes boys, are targeted in campaigns of gender-based violence, including rape, prostitution, trafficking, forced pregnancy and sexual slavery. This past year, we have seen and been reminded once again that rape has been used systematically as a weapon of war and as a means to terrorize populations and destroy communities. Adolescent girls are often singled out for this abuse. In a hospital I visited in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, girls as young as four years old lay side by side with grandmothers in their 70s. And, indeed, I would report that those who seek medical help represent only a fraction — just a small portion — of the survivors.

We are working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a variety of partners, in addition to our United Nations partners. I would mention the International Rescue Committee and the Italian non-governmental organization COOPI. We are working to try to provide care and support for survivors of sexual violence. One project supports a network of community women who reach out to survivors of rape. We are also providing support to several hospitals.

In situations of conflict, when people are extremely vulnerable, there is always the possibility that power may be abused. We, as humanitarian actors and as United Nations staff, must ensure that in our own behaviour we respect the highest standards of personal conduct. Supported by the Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, which was issued a few months ago in October 2003, we are actively promoting these principles to maintain the highest possible standards and greatest vigilance in all situations within which we and our partners are working.

We have experience, I must say — given how many wars there are now — in demobilizing child soldiers. Throughout the past several years, our country offices have engaged in dialogue with groups and Governments using children as soldiers in order to try to bring an end to that terrible practice. The Secretary-General's list of parties to conflict who recruit and use children as soldiers has been a valuable advocacy tool in that regard. The list has also created opportunities for the Office of my colleague, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and our agency to pursue collaborative actions in our advocacy efforts on behalf of children in armed conflict.

I am also pleased to draw the Council's attention to an important new tool, a guide to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, jointly prepared by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and UNICEF. It is being released today. We hope it will enable child protection advocates, Government officials, ordinary citizens and children themselves to take and bring into usage the commitment of the Optional Protocol so that specific actions can be put into effect.

In Afghanistan, working with non-governmental organizations such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), we are supporting a community-based demobilization and reintegration programme for child soldiers. We expect the programme to reach about 8,000 child soldiers over a three-year period, with formal education, accelerated learning, apprenticeships, vocational start-up kits and psychosocial and other support.

In Côte d'Ivoire, extremely difficult security conditions and political instability prevail. One of the lessons learned from past experience with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes that we have applied in Côte d'Ivoire is that child demobilization should not be contingent on formal peace processes or more comprehensive DDR exercises. Resources need to be made available for this as early as possible. We urge Council members to ensure that children's rights are taken into account

when the Council considers the revised mandate of the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire.

We have found that an essential part of re-establishing normalcy for demobilized child soldiers, as well as generally for children affected by conflict, is getting kids — boys and girls — back into school. In Liberia, we used some unconventional methods to distribute school materials. These included teachers using wheelbarrows to collect their school supplies, and a fleet of outboard canoes to reach river villages. We helped to train some 20,000 teachers and we helped in the rehabilitation of more than 3,000 schools, including working in conjunction with the schools to provide clean water and hygiene facilities. We undertook similar activities in Afghanistan, although we did not use wheelbarrows; I think we used four-legged beasts there.

When entire communities are in a state of flux, schools can provide a haven. It is therefore vital that their sanctity be protected. The misuse of schools, their occupation and attacks on them are among the worst violations of children's rights. They are also a violation of one of the most basic principles of the laws of war: that civilian sites must be protected.

Effective monitoring and reporting — again, as my colleague said earlier — on children's rights violations are essential conditions for ending impunity for crimes committed against children. The Secretary-General's report and the draft resolution on children and armed conflict contain many ideas on improving monitoring and reporting in order to hold accountable those who deliberately target, abuse or exploit children during war.

When the lives and the rights of children are at stake, there must be no silent witnesses. The challenge before us is to improve monitoring and reporting on children's rights violations by modifying and strengthening the existing human rights system so that it can better perform its intended function. There are a variety of supports out there, and I have listed them in my prepared testimony. With our partners, over the next few months, we will attempt to identify even clearer indicators and to strengthen our capacity in this area.

Monitoring and reporting serve a key function. They allow the development of a record of violations and, in so doing, provide an essential foundation for pursuing justice, accountability and, ultimately, reconciliation. It is essential that mechanisms established for such purposes be sensitive to the special situation of children and provide appropriate procedures for their participation.

While boys and girls continue to be targeted, abused and exploited — whether as soldiers, as sex slaves or both — it is important to bear in mind that there are significant ways that young people themselves are demonstrating their resilience and their ability to overcome the violence around them. I would call attention to this having been demonstrated in Timor-Leste, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Colombia.

One particularly innovative example is in the occupied Palestinian territory, where a Child-Friendly Cities framework is being piloted. Children's municipal councils — containing about 50 per cent boys and 50 per cent girls — have been set up in each of the cities to give young people an opportunity to plan and implement activities that will help improve and rebuild community life.

We appreciate the continued commitment by the Council to deal with the situation of children in armed conflict. The Secretary-General's list on the use of child soldiers, in particular, is a vital step forward. It is important to maintain the Secretary-General's list on an annual basis, and to ensure that its scope be extended to situations not strictly on the Council's agenda. Such an annual list will allow the Council to track progress made or commitments not kept. It can also request more detailed information on actions taken by the parties on the list and decide upon measures it may take to encourage greater progress in this regard. We stand ready to provide any information that the Council may wish to receive.

We encourage the Council to request, as a matter of routine, that information on child protection issues be included in all peacekeeping mandates, as well as in country-specific and thematic reports. Some of the specific issues that should be highlighted are the demobilization of child soldiers; justice, accountability and reconciliation; refugees and internally displaced persons; and gender-based violence. The Council's upcoming debates on the possible creation of several new missions and on the renewal of existing ones provide important opportunities to do exactly that.

We must ensure that children are protected from violence, abuse and exploitation. We must be able to tell children everywhere that they and their families

will be protected, that they will be able to go to school every day, that their health centres will be open and functioning and that those who abused them during the war will be brought to justice. The Security Council has a vital role to play.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund for her statement and for her kind words addressed to me.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Council.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to express our honour and pleasure at seeing you, Madam, presiding over the work of the Security Council on this very important and sensitive issue. Your presence, Madam Minister, in the Chair adds honour and prestige to the excellent work being performed by the Chilean presidency in the person of the Permanent Representative of Chile, Ambassador Heraldo Muñoz.

(*spoke in English*)

The Council has before it a comprehensive report (S/2003/1053) submitted by the Secretary-General, who deserves our congratulations. I would also like to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their introductory remarks. I should add that the report constitutes a step forward in the efforts that the United Nations began to undertake more than 10 years ago, when the first Independent Expert on children and armed conflict was appointed.

Creating a world fit for children is tantamount to guaranteeing the future of all humankind. In recent years, United Nations efforts to focus international attention on child-specific issues in the context of armed conflicts have been expanding in order to respond to the demand for action, given the seriousness of the issue and the growing number of conflicts affecting children in different parts of the world.

Brazil, for its part, has always attached great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. Over the years, negotiations concerning the international instruments related to this issue have been a continuous source of inspiration for our legislators and policy makers. Brazil is fully committed to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has recently ratified the Optional Protocols thereto.

The situation of children continues to be alarming, as they are preyed upon by parties to armed conflict around the world. Their vulnerability makes them easy victims of all sorts of abuse and gross violations of humanitarian law. It is precisely because the efforts of the international community to address this problem still fall short of what is needed to end the grievous suffering of children in armed conflict that this issue must continue to be taken up by the United Nations system and, most appropriately, by the Security Council.

In order to maximize the effect of the Council's action in this regard, it seems to our delegation that close coordination with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council is needed, given the complexity of the issue, the social and economic responsibilities of those organs and their central role in ensuring assistance to children in need.

Indeed, the treatment to be given to the issue of children and armed conflict will certainly benefit greatly if the issue is squarely placed within the context of the more general problem of children in need. This is a task that various organs of the United Nations system must address in the context of close coordination and cooperation among themselves as well as with Member States and non-governmental organizations. Coordination among the relevant departments of the Secretariat also should be strengthened and continuously reviewed.

The Secretary-General's report contains constructive elements that, further developed and duly implemented, are capable of greatly improving the situation. One of those elements is the provision of a list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in conflict situations, which would seem to be an indispensable tool for the purpose of devising strategies to deal with the problem.

For such a list to become a more efficient instrument, however, it must be made as precise as possible through continuous updating and refinement. This entails the creation of institutional mechanisms capable of leading the process of engagement with the parties responsible for the involvement of children in armed conflict. Needless to say, such mechanisms should also be reporting mechanisms. This also includes the possibility of adding or excluding names.

As it is not possible to ascribe that responsibility to one single agency or actor within the United Nations

family, given the uneven presence of such bodies in the afflicted areas, such mechanisms should include, to the extent possible, members of the Special Representative's office, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other relevant United Nations agencies having adequate field presence in designated areas, and child protection advisers, whose participation in peacekeeping operations has proved useful and is therefore deserving of expansion.

Once established, such working groups would be able to open lines of dialogue with parties in conflict, extract commitments regarding action plans for the demobilization of child soldiers, and monitor compliance. The information provided by such mechanisms would be the basis for all further action.

Such mechanisms could also be responsible for ensuring that special provisions for children are included in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, keeping in mind the stigmatization faced by children in armed conflict. The handing-in of weapons should not, however, be required for eligibility, which should be defined by broad criteria, in order to include not only combatants, but also those in ancillary activities. Monitoring and follow-up of demobilized children is also necessary.

Brazil is in favour of applying a graduated and targeted approach with regard to parties that fail to adopt measures aimed at ending violations concerning children and armed conflict. As to this point, the Secretary-General has made constructive recommendations in his report, such as the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders and their exclusion from Government structures and amnesty provisions; a ban on the export or supply of small arms; a ban on military assistance; and restrictions on the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned.

For such measures to be implemented, they must first rely on precise information, and, secondly, they must be finely tuned, so as to avoid problems common to sanctions and the conditioning of assistance, which often delay and even prevent the provision of humanitarian aid to those who most need it — in this case, children trapped in situations of conflict.

Given the persistence of the problem of children exposed to armed conflict and the need for more developments in the field, the Security Council should demonstrate its political will and, within the scope of its functions and powers, take upon itself the responsibility for maximizing the United Nations system's response to the issue of children in armed conflict. That is what is required if we are successfully to prevent childhood from being a primary victim of warfare. That is what is necessary to uphold the rights of children and to guarantee a future in which children can be bearers of hope and confidence as they emerge from conflict situations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Brazil for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all, Madam, very sincerely to thank you for having convened and for presiding over the fifth debate on this extremely important topic. Algeria is gratified that the United Nations system has taken a holistic approach to combat illegality and silence and that it has mobilized to safeguard the rights and the well-being of children, as exemplified by the outstanding work of Mr. Olara Otunnu.

Today's debate is taking place at a time when the momentum created some years ago by the Security Council is reaching the critical stage of the implementation and follow-up of its earlier resolutions. The fact that the Security Council regularly discusses this topic is evidence of the high level of interest that we attach to this issue, which is at the point of convergence between international peace and security and human rights. This twofold connection reminds us that we have a duty to be vigilant and an obligation to succeed.

To that end, we have today at our disposal a framework of binding rules that includes many international, universal and regional instruments on the protection of the rights of the child, which are complemented by the Geneva Conventions.

Regrettably, the qualitative progress that has been made at the normative level and with respect to the commitments made, in particular during the special session of the General Assembly on children, has not yet had the expected results. This is clearly stated by the Secretary-General, who emphasizes that the general situation of children remains grave and preoccupying. The extent of the tragedy is highlighted by the long list of violations and grave abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict. The multidimensional nature of this tragedy, which affects the most vulnerable sector of humanity, reminds us that

there is an urgent need for the Security Council effectively to discharge its responsibilities.

It also emphasizes the need to promote an approach that integrates, from the conceptual point of view and with respect to the practical follow-up of our resolutions, all issues related to the rights of children in armed conflict, in order to arrive at an integrated and comprehensive solution.

When dealing with this question, we cannot overlook the underlying causes that lead to the emergence and development of conflicts, of which children are the primary victims. That is why this question cannot be addressed separately from the issue of conflict prevention, which requires, inter alia, ensuring a number of rights — to education, social protection, health care and a wholesome natural environment — which all are standards that should inspire and guide all productive efforts to promote and protect the rights of the child.

Algeria welcomes and encourages the integration of the dimension of the protection of the rights of the child in peacekeeping missions, which represent an indispensable element of the follow-up and monitoring effort.

It is also essential that the follow-up and reporting system be based on credible information and that it attach priority to the most serious violations, such as the recruitment of children, massacres and mutilations, sexual violence, the use of children for the illicit exploitation of natural resources, abductions, and the denial to children of access to humanitarian assistance.

In order to be fully effective, the follow-up system must be based on reports that are precise, objective and supplemented by appropriate measures.

To that end, the United Nations system has an effective protection and monitoring system that includes treaty-based mechanisms and special procedures, whose recognized expertise and effective potential must be part of a synergetic process that is complemented by the indispensable contribution of United Nations bodies with a presence in the field. In that context, the role of Mr. Otunnu's Office is essential in providing leadership, coordinating follow-up and disseminating information. Non-governmental organizations and local structures of civil society also deserve praise for the role they play.

The relevant recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General ensure that the nascent system of implementation is long-lasting and irreversible. Algeria welcomes the adaptability and flexibility planned for the system, ensuring that each situation receives individual treatment. Its evolving nature is the best guarantee of its effectiveness.

Algeria supports the principle of systematically incorporating children's issues into peace negotiations and agreements, making them essential components of post-conflict programmes. Algeria also supports finalizing an effective monitoring and vigilance mechanism in which non-governmental organizations would have a role to play.

Algeria supports the updating of the lists and hopes to see the inclusion of specific situations of children living under foreign occupation. In that regard, Algeria encourages all appropriate measures to be taken when the parties have not made progress or have not made sufficient progress in the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. However, such measures must be targeted in such a way that the children do not suffer directly from their negative effects. The illicit trade in natural resources and small arms also calls for appropriate measures to be taken.

Monitoring and the imposition of justified sanctions will suffice only if they are strengthened by complementary parallel measures. We believe the most important of such measures is an increase in the resources allocated to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes through planned, predictable and adequate financing.

The need to be effective requires close support — so necessary for long-term undertakings such as the present one. In that regard, Algeria particularly supports the growing involvement of regional organizations and urges support for their activities. The African Commission on Human and People's Rights, which deserves credit for being the first to outlaw the recruitment of children under the age of 18, can fully play that role of close support once its means for action have been strengthened.

In conclusion, let me say that today's debate touches on the very essence of human dignity, which is not only a value shared by all but also an essential foundation of our Organization. It therefore requires of us the adoption of a global approach based on

solidarity. It is through such an approach, which draws its inspiration from the universal need for peace, democracy and development, that we will be able to "give the world to the children", to use the beautiful expression of the great poet Nazim Hikmet.

Mr. Adechi (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes you, Madam, and expresses its satisfaction at seeing you preside over the Council's work. And we associate ourselves with the thanks addressed to you for organizing this open Security Council meeting on children and armed conflict. Today's debate demonstrates the Security Council's concern about the situation of children in countries in conflict, particularly the situation of child soldiers torn from their communities by warlords who use drugs and psychological and physical violence to turn them into fierce soldiers serving causes of which they know nothing.

To stay within the five minutes given to members for their statements, I shall confine myself to just some of our concerns. The full text of my statement will be made available to delegations.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2003/1053) of 10 November 2003 addressed to the Security Council and the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 1460 (2003). The report fully analyses the question of children in armed conflict. The assessment of the progress made in protection is particularly important as a sign of the international community's awareness of the serious nature of the problem and of the need to redouble its efforts to eradicate the violence perpetrated against children. It is clear from this exhaustive report that the mechanisms for protecting children in conflicts have been strengthened in recent years by new elements at the international, regional and local levels. In that respect, we stress the obligation on belligerents to scrupulously abide by the Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is good that pursuant to its resolutions in this area, the Security Council now has a list of groups and other entities that recruit children and use them in conflicts. It is now up to the Security Council to take bold deterrent measures to put an end to the impunity enjoyed by those guilty of crimes against children. Here, resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003) provide a good starting point. If the Security Council announced stricter measures, it would add credibility to efforts in the area of prevention and would make them more effective.

As did the Secretary-General, my delegation underlines the initiatives taken by the Economic Community of West African States, in particular the adoption in 2000 of the Accra Declaration and Plan of Action on War-Affected Children and the measures subsequently taken in the context of the implementation of those documents. Nevertheless, the problem remains crucial in the subregion of West Africa, which requires active mobilization by the international community to end the recruitment of child soldiers, which, unfortunately, continues.

My delegation believes that in order to be effective the campaign against the abuses and crimes of war of which conflict-affected children are victims, must be waged taking into consideration all factors that incite those abuses. In that respect, my delegation views as very well founded the identification of the link between violations of the rights of children and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, landmines and unexploded ordinance. It is obvious that the progress that could be made in combating the proliferation of such weapons could have a real impact on war-affected children. It is therefore a matter of urgency that the differences of view preventing the international community from effectively waging a campaign against those scourges be overcome. The ease with which non-State armed groups acquire weapons is completely incomprehensible and calls for action by the Security Council, which has the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

Another phenomenon that has emerged alongside the violation of the rights of children is the illegal exploitation of natural resources, an area in which children are being used in horrendous conditions — as is well known — and are subjected to a multitude of abuses. The resources illicitly procured in this manner fuel and indefinitely prolong conflicts. The Security Council needs the means to put an end to those practices and to enable the people of the countries concerned to exploit their own natural resources peacefully in order to promote their economic and social development under the political regime of their choice. My delegation supports all the efforts that that have and could be made in this area. We hope that the relevant bodies of the United Nations system will act immediately on the ground. We are grateful to the

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the important work it has done to assist children everywhere there is a need. We also welcome the interest non-governmental organizations have shown in protecting children in conflicts.

It is also important for peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council to be planned in a way that provides a framework for the recovery of war-affected children. From that point of view, responding to the needs of those children should be an essential component of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Such an approach would benefit affected children and the international community as a whole, because it would make it possible to facilitate the return of children to normal civilian life and to replace the culture of violence inculcated in their minds with a culture of peace.

In conclusion, my delegation believes it is important that today's discussion lead to concrete measures on the part of the Security Council to implement the Secretary-General's recommendations and the relevant proposals made during this open meeting. In that respect, my delegation is prepared to contribute in the coming days to the formulation and adoption of the draft resolution initiated by the French delegation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Benin for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): It is most appropriate, and we in the Security Council are particularly honoured, that this meeting is being presided over by you, Madam Minister, which is a way of according to our deliberations the high importance that they deserve.

I should like to thank the Chilean presidency for convening this meeting, which translates the Security Council's concern and renewed awareness about one of today's most critical humanitarian issues, which the international community must redouble its efforts to eradicate completely from contemporary life. The abuse of children and their exploitation to wage war constitute the coarsest violation of human rights as well as an unspeakable act of violence against the universal conscience in a world that should aspire to full respect for the integrity and development of human life.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2003/1053), and we express our gratitude to Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their briefings this morning. We fully appreciate their important contributions on behalf of children caught in the middle of armed conflicts — contributions aimed at reducing their suffering and eradicating this most condemnable phenomenon.

Thanks to the efforts of the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and relevant United Nations bodies, an international consensus has been reached to end the involvement of children in armed conflicts and to recognize children's rights in any conflict situation. Such is the basic assumption embodied in the Secretary-General's report on the issue we are considering today, leading to some very important conclusions.

The first is the commitment of the Secretary-General and of the entire United Nations system to improve and change the situation of children in armed conflict. The second is the existence of a framework comprising standards, norms, best practices and policies, establishing benchmarks to be achieved by the actors in armed conflicts and by the international community in order to push forward the fundamental objectives of protecting children and putting an end to such abhorrent violations of children's human rights. The third is the naming and shaming of those involved in such practices. It is our expectation that that can be a factor of deterrence or, otherwise, the first phase of a process conducive to the imposition of targeted measures against those who persist in challenging the international community on such fundamental humanitarian issues.

The Secretary-General's report refers in a number of instances to the advances achieved in the protection of children affected by armed conflict. The inclusion of this issue on the Security Council's agenda is an important contribution to such an endeavour. The Council's adoption of four resolutions and its undertaking of relevant initiatives such as the integration of child protection into the mandates and reports of peacekeeping missions and the training of personnel to that end, as well as the creation of child protection advisers and their deployment in peacekeeping missions, are clear indications of the progress we have accomplished.

Important international instruments are in force, and concrete commitments on the protection of children have been obtained from parties to conflicts. In that regard, we fully agree with the strategy, outlined by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, of strengthening the foundation of an era of implementation by facing the challenge of ensuring the implementation of these standards on the ground.

The section of the report on the follow-up to Security Council resolution 1460 (2003) portrays a reality that is distressing indeed. Particular violations and abuses against children, such as killing, maiming, sexual and gender-based violence and the abduction of children, continue unabated, with all parties mentioned in the previous report engaged in the recruitment and abuse of children — a situation that we condemn in the strongest terms and that must be reversed through determination and coordination of efforts on the part of the stakeholders.

My delegation fully supports the blueprint for action outlined in the Secretary-General's report to counter the vicious exploitation of children in situations of armed conflict. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes must become an integral part of peacekeeping operations and must include specific provisions for the protection of children. The deployment of child protection advisers in all peacekeeping missions must become normal practice, ensuring that the situation of all children affected by conflict is properly addressed. The awareness of the parties to conflict must be further intensified and refined with a view to obtaining concrete commitments concerning the well-being of children and ending child soldiering. The proposal put forward by the Special Representative to ensure more effective monitoring and reporting within the United Nations system must become a central element in the fight against the abuse of children in conflict situations. We are convinced that those proposals, if effectively brought into practice, will give a decisive boost to the universal struggle against this condemnable state of affairs.

In that connection, we consider it important to strengthen the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the role it has played in facilitating and coordinating the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism to achieve our objectives. Angola fully commends the Office's mandate and recognizes the importance of supporting it from the United Nations regular budget, as decided in General Assembly resolution 58/245, adopted by the Assembly last month.

After 25 years of armed conflict, my country, Angola, is now in the process of reintegrating into normal life many thousands of children affected by that conflict. Several steps have been taken and policies have been put in place to guarantee the safety and social reintegration of those children. The first is the establishment of a youth court to receive complaints regarding crimes committed against minors, in particular those affected by the conflict. The second is a family localization and recruitment programme to help reunite children separated from their families during the conflict.

The third is a national programme of free birth certification, in collaboration with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In 2003, more than 600,000 children affected by the conflict have been successfully integrated into the national educational system. A number of programmes for the reintegration of children in their communities and for their mental and physical recovery have also been established, as well as a disarmament and mine-clearance programme aimed at protecting and safeguarding the well-being of children.

A lot remains to be done in solving this most painful heritage of war. But the Angolan Government, civil society and the Angolan nation at large are determined, with the assistance of the international community, including the international civil servants and non-governmental organizations, to definitively turn this dark page of our recent history and ensure for the Angolan youth a life of dignity and a future with renewed hope.

To conclude, I would like to refer to the last recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2003/1053), which addresses what we believe to be the core question of the issue we are discussing today. In fact, we fully subscribe to the recommendation that greater and more concerted efforts be deployed to end ongoing conflicts, which are destroying the lives of millions of children, and to address the key factors that facilitate the occurrence and recurrence of conflict. This is not only possible, it is imperative.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Angola for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are happy to welcome you to the Security Council chamber, Madam President. We are grateful to Mr. Olara Otunnu for his briefing, his introduction to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/1053) and for the work he does to protect children in conflict. We are grateful to Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for her major contribution to the work of the Council today.

Children are one of the most vulnerable segments of populations in armed conflicts. Children who participate in hostilities, children who are the victims of war, refugee children, disabled children and outcast children — these have become the tragic result of many civil and international conflicts. Given the magnitude and severity of this phenomenon, particularly in Africa, it can be viewed as a new threat to peace and security in individual regions.

The protection of the rights of children, inter alia, in armed conflict and in post-conflict situations, is one of the most important tasks of the international community. The most reliable way to protect children is to prevent conflicts from arising. Here it is hard to overestimate the role played by the United Nations and its Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

We appreciate the report of the Secretary-General prepared for today's meeting of the Security Council, and we would like to dwell on a few points that we think are of priority importance.

First is the problem of the use of child soldiers by armed groups — and not just by illegal armed groups, either, but by Government forces as well. We strongly condemn the recruitment of child soldiers. According to international law, these are war crimes that are massive in nature. In this connection, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General to identify those parties to armed conflicts that continue the outrageous practice of using child combatants. However, we would like to refer here to the need for a more careful, more balanced approach to a legal assessment of the situation and to the need for correct terminology, in particular when talking about specific countries' situations.

It is important that the international community, including the United Nations Security Council, become more actively involved in resolving this problem. We need to consider how already adopted Security Council decisions in this area are being implemented, and we need to appeal to specific culprits to stop recruiting or using children in armed conflicts. It is time to assess what practical measures, including measures contained in Council resolutions, need to be taken against those people who systematically disregard the requirements of the Security Council in this area.

However, international efforts in this area are clearly insufficient. We regret that national bodies are not demonstrating the proper will to do this, although they are the ones that bear the primary responsibility for resolving the problem of impunity. We need to take a careful look and see whether countries that are affected by this scourge have a sufficient legislative foundation and we need to see how adequate their system of justice is. If necessary, the international community could provide appropriate assistance.

We agree with the widely held view of the usefulness of an additional system of monitoring and information regarding the protection of children in armed conflict in individual sub-regions. For example, given the transborder nature of this problem in Western Africa, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in this sub-region, in cooperation with the United Nations missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, could undertake this monitoring.

We agree with the sections of the report that refer to the mainstreaming of the child factor in the mandates of peacekeeping missions, to providing access to humanitarian organizations in conflict areas, to the separation of civilians from combatants and to the maintenance of the civilian nature of places where refugees and internally displaced persons are held.

An important topic is the sexual exploitation of children, in particular that of girls, who are the most vulnerable group of the population in conflict situations in this respect. Particularly outrageous are instances where sexual violence is practised not merely by armed factions and groups, but by humanitarian personnel and by peacekeepers, in whom the victims place special trust and from whom they expect

kindness and assistance. Russia fully supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to provide comprehensive training for United Nations personnel, to establish strict control over their behaviour and to prevent impunity for the perpetrators.

The implementation of the humanitarian component of the protection of children in armed conflict should be a particular prerogative of the specialized organizations — the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and others that have their own mandates. Overall political support in implementing these tasks should be provided by the Security Council, with a key role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, in particular when it comes to helping to create and coordinate activities in the monitoring mechanism. It is hard to overestimate the role that is being played here by the many non-governmental organizations. These selfless people deserve our particular gratitude.

We hope that the draft document that will be adopted following today's discussion will reflect the need for strict compliance with the United Nations Charter and the appropriate resolutions of the Security Council, as well as the norms and principles of international law, including humanitarian law.

Mr. Motoc (Romania) (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure for my delegation, Madame, to see you personally presiding over the Council. Your presence here today, as the Council is seized with a phenomenon, the magnitude and cruelty of which were sadly recalled to mind by the powerful video we have just seen, reinforces the message we intend to send. We welcome the very well-documented and motivational briefing provided by Special Representative Olara Otunnu, as well as his overall dedication to the protection of children. We welcome the presence of Ms. Carol Bellamy and her tremendous work at the helm of the United Nations Children's Fund.

The delegation of Romania fully associates itself with the statement to be made by the Irish Presidency of the European Union.

The recruitment of children as fighters in combat zones throughout the world and the many facets of their exploitation are a shameful reality of our contemporary world. The fact that the Security Council has decided to address the scourge of children in war is remarkable and we rejoice that our forum is so strongly committed to that topic and to see that so many Members of the United Nations have come to express their interest in today's debate.

A child soldier — removed from his family and compelled to confront the horror of war, where he will often be injured, mutilated or mentally traumatized by the fear and hatred engraved in his memory — is not merely deprived of his childhood; his fate as an adult is also jeopardized. The adoption of resolution 1460 (2003) was a step forward in our common task to prevent such tragedy from striking the lives of many children and to alleviate whatever harm may already have been caused. One element of the resolution that we believe deserves particular attention is the stand taken on situations in which women and children — girls in particular — have been victims of sexual exploitation or abuse in the context of a humanitarian crisis, especially when the perpetrators are peacekeepers or humanitarian personnel.

Today, considering the Secretary-General's remarkable report, we learn with satisfaction that the six core principles elaborated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee have been incorporated into the code of conduct of the staff of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. This is a major step forward and Romania, as a country that provides significant troop contingents to peacekeeping missions in several parts of the world, can only welcome the Secretary-General's intention to extend the application of those principles to the personnel of the United Nations as a whole.

I take this opportunity to recall that Romania was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We have taken note with great interest and are carefully analysing the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report designed to intensify the struggle against the recruitment and involvement of children in armed conflict.

The time has indeed come to ensure that the existing standards are effectively applied by the parties concerned. To that end, we support the establishment of a systematic, objective and comprehensive

mechanism to follow up and report on violations of children's rights in conflict areas. To that end, using the United Nations network in the field in conflict zones would seem to be the most suitable solution. At the same time, one United Nations agency in the field will have to act as a focal point for such a mechanism, facilitating a coherent and effective dialogue with the parties to a conflict and the conceptualization and implementation of specific plans of action, for instance in the field of education. We support the potential role of the International Criminal Court in prosecuting and sentencing those guilty of war crimes against children.

I wish to express our full appreciation for the prodigious efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, whose dedication to and competence in the protection of children in armed conflict are well known. We hope that he will be able to pursue the implementation of the proposals set out in his report of August 2003, to play an active role in reviewing information on violations of protection standards for children in times of war, and to propose follow-up action.

We must not forget the progress achieved outside the United Nations context thanks to the tremendous efforts of non-governmental and civil society organizations, including at the regional level. We encourage them to pursue their outstanding work in the field, including in preventing recruitment, in relieving the suffering of child victims and in the complex activity of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, in close cooperation with United Nations agencies on the ground.

The Security Council will soon initiate consultations on a new draft resolution that should provide clear guidelines for future steps to protect children in situations of armed conflict. I am convinced that, with the resolve and commitment of the members of the Council, the text of the draft resolution will be rapidly agreed on and can be adopted soon.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I, too, should like to welcome you back to the Security Council, Madame. The fact that you have left the warm climes of Santiago for the frigid weather in New York is testimony to the priority which you and your country attach to the important item on children that we are considering today. This item and our debate are ultimately linked to a central purpose of the United Nations Charter: to save succeeding generations — that is, our children — from the scourge of war.

I should also like to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for their comprehensive presentations to us, which will enrich the Council's deliberations and decisions on this item.

As the Council reviews the progress made so far, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for once again presenting a report which is concise and yet comprehensive. The recommendations contained therein merit careful consideration by the Council, and we hope that this will soon be translated into a consensus resolution. We also appreciate unyielding commitment and efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, as well as the role which UNICEF is playing as the lead United Nations agency, to protect children from the disastrous impact of conflicts. I must add that the community of non-governmental organizations, too, has made invaluable contributions. For a sustained and meaningful engagement, particularly with non-State actors, it is important that non-governmental organizations maintain objectivity and pursue a purely humanitarian agenda.

The Secretary-General's report this year covers new ground. Besides listing parties to conflicts on the Council's active agenda that continued to recruit children, it also lists parties to other conflicts not on the Council's agenda. We endorse this approach of what is popularly called "naming and shaming" as a useful tool for securing compliance by the parties. To this end, both the conflicts and the parties to the conflicts should be identified.

The issue of child soldiers has deservedly been addressed extensively in previous reports. There is also a need to highlight other egregious violations and abuses perpetrated against children in conflict situations. The Secretary-General's report this year has devoted a section to an assessment of such violations and abuses.

The central challenge now, as rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, is to ensure the application of the comprehensive body of international standards which have been adopted. In this context, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes are now an integral part of peacekeeping operations.

Yet, because they are vulnerable to economic and psychological pressures, children are at risk of re-recruitment. Projects providing economic opportunities and educational facilities for demobilized children and their social integration can be useful ways to prevent re-recruitment.

We favour the Secretary-General's proposal to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism. However, rather than create new mechanisms, it would be more effective to enforce the existing operating mechanisms. Moreover, the intergovernmental nature of such mechanisms should be preserved.

Reliable and accurate information is essential for the monitoring and implementation of commitments. The Council may consider the compilation — and regular updating — of a general compendium of statistical data on children affected by armed conflict, including an assessment of violations and abuse of children, and, if possible, those responsible for such violations. This could then be appended to the Secretary-General's annual report.

The collection of such data should be entrusted, where possible, to United Nations country offices, humanitarian teams or peacekeeping missions. A focal point could be created in the Department of Political Affairs to work in close consultations with the Secretary-General's Special Representative so as to coordinate the mainstreaming of child protection into all aspects of peace operations, including DDR.

Tragically, the international community usually becomes engaged with the plight of children at the end of conflicts. There are, by then, fewer children to save, and most have already endured the worst suffering. Our principal endeavour in the Security Council must therefore be to ensure that the protection of children in armed conflict begins before conflicts break out — before wars are fought and the killing and maiming begins. The international community must address the root causes of conflict, which in most cases are socio-economic inequities, systematic ethnic discrimination, denial of human rights and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The Security Council has a special responsibility in this regard. It has the authority and the capability to create the mechanisms and modalities that can help it to discharge its fundamental and central role of preventing conflict and promoting the pacific settlement of disputes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): We are gratified that the presidency of the Council has recognized the importance of the issue of children and armed conflict by placing it on its agenda early in the year. We are honoured that you, Madam, the Foreign Minister of Chile, are presiding over this morning's meeting.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund for their important briefings.

The issue of children and armed conflict has been the subject of a number Security Council resolutions. In its most recent resolution on the subject, resolution 1460 (2003), the Security Council calls on, among others, the parties to armed conflict to provide information about steps taken to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and develop action plans to end child soldier use.

We therefore support the call of the Secretary-General that we must now move towards what he has called an era of application of international standards and norms for the protection of children in armed conflict.

In this connection, there needs to be within the United Nations system — where the roles of relevant United Nations entities are clearly defined — an effective framework for the protection of children involved in armed conflict. Spelling out responsibilities and tasks will be an important step in ensuring that the critical response areas are covered and that duties are not duplicated. The proposals of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on the development of a monitoring network of organs and bodies in the United Nations serve as a good starting point for identifying and assigning responsibilities based on their competencies and expertise. For its part, the Council should be able to determine its vital enforcement role in the network in a manner that is supportive of the work of other bodies that also have a mandate with regard to the situation of children in armed conflict. In carrying out its role, the Council should set priorities for action and make sure that its work is focused, particularly on areas where results might be tangible and immediately achievable.

An example of a focused task is ensuring that child protection standards are consistently implemented in peacekeeping missions. The Council could also provide guidance in prioritizing countries and conflict areas that would need donor support for long-term community reintegration and rehabilitation. Experience on the ground has shown that when there are not enough resources to sustain disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, the incidence of reprisal is increased and gains in improving the situation of children are wasted because of the lack or inadequacy of follow-through efforts.

The Council should give emphasis to conflict prevention by recognizing the root factors of conflict, in particular the lack of development. In many communities, children involved in armed conflict usually come from areas where basic social services are inadequate. The experience of the Philippines in addressing the development aspects of conflict has been encouraging. Our Comprehensive Programme Framework for Children involved in Armed Conflict, which regards children as zones of peace, includes, as a major component, the integrated delivery of social services such as food security, livelihood programmes, education and health care in order to combat poverty and reduce the incidence of recruitment and exploitation of children in conflict areas. In this respect, the Security Council can be instrumental, through its peacekeeping missions, in ensuring a safe environment that is conducive to the unimpeded and effective delivery of basic social services in conflict areas.

We support the Secretary-General's suggestion on the need systematically to incorporate children's issues into all peace negotiations and peace accords, including conducting a dialogue on child soldiers with parties in conflict.

Drawing again on our own experience, the Philippine Government has benefited from integrating the interests of children in its "Six Paths to Peace", which serves as the general framework for the implementation of the peace process with groups in conflict. Path Five of this framework addresses concerns arising from continuing armed hostilities, namely the rehabilitation needs of war-affected families and communities, and the role of children and youth in peace-building.

Our Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the Philippine Council for the Welfare of Children provide technical input on various conflict- resolution approaches that prevent and address the occurrence of the exploitation of children and youth in armed conflict.

Any step that the Council decides to take in addressing the situation of children in armed conflict should be based on reliable data and information. A follow-up system and commitments by all parties regarding steps they are taking to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers could be instituted. It is critical that information be gathered systematically and analysed effectively to enable the Council to assess the level of compliance by parties with their obligation to protect children. A database on all violations should strengthen and build on previous measures taken by the Council, and a monitoring process or system along the lines advocated by Brazil could be established for that purpose.

As the film has shown, children are not only our hope for the future; they are also the reality of the present. There are opportunities within the Council's mandate to ensure an environment that protects children and helps them realize their right to live a normal life. The non-governmental organization community has contributed greatly and has expressed its readiness further to assist in this regard. Now is the time to move towards concrete plans of action for children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Philippines for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Holliday (United States of America): Madam President, allow me to welcome you and to thank you for having convened this meeting today. I wish also to thank you for your leadership — and Chile's leadership — on this issue, and also for having shown the compelling film we saw earlier in the meeting.

I should like also to thank Special Representative Otunnu, both for his statement this morning and for the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict. It is very important that the Security Council and our Governments, as Member States, keep the issue of children and armed conflict in our focus.

The United States recognizes the terrible consequences of using children in armed conflict in all

regions of the world. The use of child soldiers is contributing to violence and great suffering. Through children, we know innocence, love, tenderness and hope. They are the benchmarks of humanity. We are measured by how we care for our children, how we nurture and nourish them, educate them and shelter them. It is our duty as members of the Council to do as much as we can to eliminate the tragedy of children in armed conflict.

The Secretary-General's report describes the terrible circumstances where the use of child soldiers continues. My country fully supports the request for all parties listed in the annexes of the report to halt the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of international obligations.

The child-soldier problem is particularly dire in Burma, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, parts of the Republic of the Congo, Liberia and northern Uganda. To highlight a few of these problem areas, Burma is thought to have the largest number of child soldiers in the world. Human Rights Watch recently documented the widespread forced recruitment of boys as young as 11 by Burma's national army. Many are forced to fight against armed ethnic opposition groups and to carry out human rights abuses such as rounding up villagers for forced labour, burning houses and even attacking civilians.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers recently reported that children may account for 35 to 45 per cent of new recruits into the national army and for 70,000 or more of Burma's estimated 350,000 soldiers. Child soldiers are also used in ethnic armies.

We encourage Burma's neighbours to provide protection to any child soldiers who desert from the national or ethnic armies and to allow international relief organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to provide assistance to resettle and reintegrate them into society.

Colombia's children have long been affected by that country's devastating conflict, including some 11,000 who are currently fighting in irregular armies, including paramilitary and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla forces. Boys and girls, some as young as 10 years old, are often recruited forcibly and used as combatants, spies, messengers, porters, kidnappers, guards, cooks, sexual companions or slaves, even for placing and removing bombs. Girls in guerrilla and paramilitary groups are particularly at risk of sexual abuse.

In Côte d'Ivoire, armed forces continue to recruit young Liberians from refugee camps in the western part of the country. Equally as tragic, Congolese armed forces continue to have children in their ranks, despite commitments to demobilization. Charles Taylor, Liberia's former President, stepped down in August, and, on one positive note, shortly after Taylor's departure, 80 ex-child soldiers who had been fighting in the ranks of either Government or opposition forces were under the care of the United Nations in Monrovia, and we salute the efforts of the United Nations in Liberia. There is still a great deal more to be done in that country, however.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has waged a civil war against the Government of Uganda since the mid-1980s. UNICEF estimates that between June 2002 and May 2003, the LRA abducted 8,400 children from northern Uganda to serve as soldiers. UNICEF also estimates that during the past 16 years of fighting, more than 14,000 children have been abducted by the LRA. The United Nations estimates that an average of 20 children are abducted on a daily basis.

Children are forced to participate in acts of extreme violence and are often compelled to help beat or hack to death fellow child captives who have attempted to escape. Girls as young as 12 are given to commanders as de facto wives. Some abducted children have managed to escape, while others have died from disease, mistreatment or combat wounds.

Although I have specifically mentioned only six Governments that need to take immediate action to eliminate the use of child soldiers, the other Governments mentioned in the Secretary-General's report that harbour child soldiers must also take action. Of course, I have also mentioned, in addition to Governments, armed groups that have perpetrated these horrible acts.

The United States fully supports the following measures: a specific request by the Council that the Secretary-General submit another list to the Security Council next year naming all Governments and armed groups that illegally recruit and use child soldiers, not just in countries that are currently on the Council's agenda; active monitoring of Governments and armed groups that have already been named; and direct dialogue with the Governments and armed groups

concerned by the Council or the Secretary-General in order to develop action plans to eliminate the use of child soldiers.

Again, a positive note: the number of States parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict continues to increase. This past year realized an increase of 21, to a total of 66 States parties, demonstrating important leadership on the effort to end the phenomenon of child soldiers.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report and are reviewing its specific recommendations closely. We look forward to working with the other Council members on a closer review of the report. Last week's Arria-style meeting, under the leadership of Ambassador de La Sablière, was a solid step in that direction.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the United States for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a pleasure for me, Madam, to see you presiding over the Council today. The fact that you chose this day to do so is clear evidence of your personal commitment, and that of your country, to ending the tragedy of children in armed conflict.

My country wishes to associate itself with the statement to be made by the European Union.

I should like to begin by acknowledging the work of Mr. Otunnu. His tireless efforts, dedication and commitment deserve praise.

The fact that we are meeting today to consider the question of children and armed conflict bears witness to the primary importance the Council attaches to the problem. That is in itself both a positive and, regrettably, negative fact. It is positive because it demonstrates the international community's high level of awareness of the issue. It is negative because at the same time it is a sign that the problem persists, that we have not be able to resolve it and that, in certain respects, the problem has even worsened.

That is not due to a lack of legal or institutional structures. Both exist. But, unfortunately, we have not been able to apply them fully. Precisely for that reason, it seems to us that the most appropriate course of action now is to focus on how to act effectively to achieve that implementation of existing instruments. In that respect, we believe that we can concentrate on the following areas.

The first is the area of action. Without doubt, the recruitment of children into armed groups is one of the key areas. But it is not the only one. Other aspects should also be included, such as the killing and maiming of children, their abduction and forced displacement, obstacles to children's access to humanitarian assistance and to education, and sexual violence, in particular against girls — as noted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Bellamy, whose work I applaud. The gender perspective is essential and must never be forgotten.

Secondly, the existence of the lists is certainly an important element. They constitute the core of a necessary policy of deterrence and ending impunity. However, the lists must be widely accepted in order to be truly effective. Therefore, the criteria for the inclusion of groups in the lists — or their exclusion — must be studied in detail.

The third element is monitoring and reporting. As Mr. Otunnu indicated, these activities must be carried out, evaluated and communicated precisely and quickly with a view to taking decisions and taking action. The system must be strengthened at its roots, in other words on the ground. To do so, above all, the performance of the child protection advisers should be evaluated, and the participation of local communities and non-governmental organizations in the mechanism should be encouraged from the start.

The fourth element is coordination among the various bodies of the United Nations system. There should be complete consistency from activities in the field through to the level of Headquarters, where the role of the Special Representative is essential. At the same time, we should continue the policy of including the question of children and armed conflict both in the reports of the Secretary-General on specific situations and in the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

With those elements, it should be possible to elaborate in a fixed period of time — for example, four, five or six months — specific plans of action that propose concrete measures to put an end to this tragedy of the twenty-first century.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Spain for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): We are happy, Madam President, that you are with us today. I am very much aware of the honour paid to us by your presence in the Chair for this important debate. I also thank Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their briefings, which have enlightened our debate. After the video that we saw at the beginning of this meeting, it is obviously difficult to resort to mere platitudes. We must at least try to live up to the strong, simple messages that those bruised children addressed to us. The suffering of a child caught in the maelstrom of a war waged by adults is always unacceptable. But the fact that that child could be exploited or used in war and that this suffering could go on in a disturbing climate of impunity is, of course, repugnant. It is indeed a scandal that the international community must not tolerate.

That, I think, is the meaning of United Nations initiatives taken in recent years in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations, which in this and other areas have played a pioneering role. I welcome this unanimous commitment of the Security Council, which enables us to go ever further in condemning and fighting impunity.

This mobilization goes beyond the Security Council. It was thanks to the commitment of the entire international community that we were able to adopt the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits the recruitment of minors, and to include in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court specific provisions on the recruitment and use of child soldiers, which are defined as war crimes.

The two latest resolutions adopted by the Council on this item take note of and welcome those normative steps and establish the Council's own follow-up mechanism. As we all know, resolution 1379 (2001), adopted on 20 November 2001, the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, created a black list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use child soldiers in violation of their international obligations. Resolution 1460 (2003) of January 2002 continues that list and extends its scope. It opens the way to targeted sanctions against the perpetrators. At a more operational level, closely connected to the work of the Council, it provides for a more systematic inclusion of the protection of children in the planning of peacekeeping or peace-building operations.

In brief, today we have a full arsenal of norms. And I do not think we need to be ashamed of our record. But the fact that, despite the progress on regulations and despite the political pressure of repeated denunciation and systematic naming and shaming, the reality on the ground remains very grim. This morning, Mr. Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy recalled for the Council this reality and its statistics. It is as if all those who violated international laws on the protection of children in armed conflict were saying to themselves, "In the end, New York is a long way away", and that the decisions made in our glass tower hardly concern them.

I do not think we can accept that state of affairs. The question now is clear: what can we do to make progress in the implementation of the norms at our disposal? There are many proposals on the table, including the proposals of the Secretary-General in his fourth report to the Council. Here again I welcome the role played by my friend Olara Otunnu and his team, as well as the role of Carol Bellamy and her colleagues in UNICEF. Their experience on the ground is indispensable. We also have the proposals of the non-governmental organizations with which we met last week and which shared with us their analyses and suggestions, which I found very interesting.

Those proposals are many and varied, and — I repeat — they are unanimous on one point: today we do not need new norms; we need action. We need implementation, particularly concrete implementation on the ground. That message has been understood by my delegation, which last week submitted a draft resolution to our partners on the Security Council. Negotiations should get under way tomorrow, following our debate, and I hope that we shall be able to adopt the text, under the enlightened presidency of Ambassador Muñoz, by the end of January.

I should like to say a few words about what are essentially our objectives in submitting this text. First of all, as I just emphasized, we must establish a proper monitoring mechanism on the ground that will enable us to assess very precisely progress with regard to every armed group that the report of the Secretary-General lists as recruiting and using child soldiers.

Such a mechanism, which will involve the competent United Nations actors already present on the ground, will enable the Council, on the basis of precise, reliable information, to decide on actions to be taken.

Then — and this is an important point, since the sufferings endured by children in armed conflicts are not limited to their enrolment in armed forces — we must take into account all the grave violations of children's rights in conflict areas. Such violations also include kidnapping, mutilation, sexual violence and attacks against schools and hospitals.

Another element to which we attach particular importance relates to encouraging action by regional organizations to protect children in armed conflicts. Two recent initiatives that we think should be welcomed are that of the Economic Community of West African States, which, in Dakar in September 2003, created a peer review mechanism, and that of the European Union, which in December adopted guidelines on children in armed conflict. My colleague the representative of Ireland, who will speak later on behalf of the European Union, will touch upon that important initiative. Needless to say, I totally support his statement.

No member of the Council, I believe, can fail to subscribe to those objectives, even if there may be some differences regarding their practical implementation. Therefore, we hope that it will be possible to swiftly reach agreement on the draft resolution by the end of the month.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to me.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking you, Madam President, for providing us with the opportunity of this debate. Your presence underlines your personal commitment and that of Chile to this very important issue. I should like to join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2003/1053) and for the work of his Special Representative. I am thankful also for the work of the many organizations involved — especially the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations — for all their contributions. I should like to associate myself with the remarks to be made later by the Irish Presidency of the European Union.

Today's debate on children and armed conflict is very important for my Government, as for others around this table. It is an issue that causes the United Kingdom to work hard to support, at all levels in the United Nations system and beyond, the efforts made to arrest this grim problem. As today's interventions show, children and armed conflict is a highly complex issue, intertwining political, legal, social and institutional issues. But we have an obligation to find answers and to resolve those issues on behalf of children.

Today we have heard two simple messages. The first is about the history that underpins the consideration of this issue in the United Nations. That provides a benchmark for measuring the progress that has been made, and we should be pleased about that progress. But the second message is self-evident: we are still not doing enough. Even as we speak, children throughout the world continue to suffer. It is time to focus on results and on action.

Graça Machel's study (A/51/306), submitted in 1996, was a watershed — a watershed for the United Nations and for the international system's consideration of children and armed conflict. That study set out in very explicit terms — which are every bit as relevant today — the impact of conflict on children's lives. It remains a touchstone for our collective effort to improve the lives of children in conflict regions.

We have made commendable progress. At the international level, in 2003 we recognized and applauded the establishment of a strengthened normative framework for the protection of children in armed conflict. The Secretary-General then rightly called for — and Mr. Otunnu this morning emphasized the need for — an era of application. But today, as we engage in this debate, others have expressed — and let me repeat — the extreme regret that, at the national level in many situations today, we have barely scratched the surface of this challenge.

In Burma, it is estimated that up to 70,000 children, some as young as 11, are forcibly recruited by the State army, where they are used in armed conflict. Children also suffer abuse inflicted by ethnic armed groups. In northern Uganda, we continue to witness a situation that deserves a far higher profile: the horrific kidnapping of children by the Lord's Resistance Army. These children are used to beat and kill civilians, to

kidnap other children and to fight against government forces. The further tragedy is that these children — intimidated, forced to take such actions — have nowhere to go. They are rejected by their families and their communities because of those actions and are increasingly locked into a cycle of terror. Ms. Bellamy already referred to the situation in West and Central Africa, among other areas.

I was quite horrified when, in a discussion at the end of last week, someone referred in very matter-of-fact terms to a colonel aged 17. The logic of that was inevitable: if your privates are all aged 10 to 12, by the time they are promoted, they can become colonels at 17. A harsher indictment I cannot imagine. Situations like those, in which thousands of children suffer egregious violations of their rights on a daily basis, must be the focus of our highest priority and of our actions.

Such situations stand in stark contrast to the internal disturbance in Northern Ireland — covered in the report — where there is not and has not been a situation of armed conflict and where, in addition, there has been real progress in addressing the issue of children's rights. In addition to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, there is now a Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland with a broad remit and significant powers to ensure the protection of children's interests. Those developments take place against the background of an established and increasingly successful political process.

When we come to this debate next year, we need to be talking about tangible, positive outcomes for children in conflict regions. To do that, as others have said, we now need to establish a plan detailing practical steps to achieve measurable progress by the time the next report is written.

Last month, when the Security Council debated the protection of civilians in armed conflict, I set out three interconnected themes that, in our view, the United Nations system should collectively address, and they are just as relevant to today's debate.

First, we must end abuse. We should establish incentives and define what actions perpetrators should take to end their abuse of children, including by setting out indicators for progress and the consequences of inaction.

Secondly, knowledge: we need to know about the situation on the ground and the responses that we are getting to the incentives that we provide. That is what we understand by effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation: knowing the outcomes and assessing the situation against the objectives of the international community and the basic rights of children.

Thirdly, we need action to tackle continuing abuse through an effective United Nations system-wide response, working with Governments and civil society organizations, with the right people in the right place with the right skills at the right time. This is what we mean by "mainstreaming", a dimension which we should, as a matter of course, cover in Security Council resolutions addressing conflict and post-conflict situations.

An institutional road map should set out who should do what and when, and then set out core responsibilities. Changing the way things are done can sometimes pose tough questions, but we can no longer afford to duck them, so we require vision and strong and effective leadership at all levels. That is why we strongly support the Secretary-General's assessment of response to children in armed conflict the United Nations system as a whole. If our debate next year is to focus on those tangible outcomes for children, it is vital that the report before us today lead to concrete actions at all levels.

Member States have a responsibility as well, a responsibility to ensure that we provide sufficient human and financial resources to support disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes that address the very specific and challenging needs of child soldiers, including their education. My Government stands ready to offer its support.

Finally, I am struck that Graça Machel's words in 1996 remain as relevant now as they were then. Describing her report as a call to action, she said:

> "It is unforgivable that children are assaulted, violated, murdered and yet our conscience is not revolted nor our sense of dignity challenged. This represents a fundamental crisis of our civilization. The impact of armed conflict on children must be everyone's concern and is everyone's responsibility — Governments, international organizations and every element of civil society. ...

> "Let us transform our moral outrage into concrete action. Our children have a right to peace". ... (A/51/306)

That message should underpin our work.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): Madam President, let me first of all, like other speakers, welcome you to the chair of this discussion. It shows the importance that you attach to this issue under discussion in the Council, and we appreciate that very much.

In this debate almost exactly one year ago, I spoke about helpless outrage at unimaginable atrocities being a common feature of our age. I also mentioned that this Council, with the powers vested in it by the United Nations Charter, is one of the few bodies that does not have to confine itself to helpless outrage. One year later, we have arrived at a crucial juncture, and I will come back to that in a moment.

But first, let me express our heartfelt thanks to the Ambassador of France, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, and his delegation for their strong leadership on this issue. No other delegation has done more to put this issue of child protection, especially the issue of child soldiering, high on the Council's agenda. I would like to assure you, Mr. Ambassador, that we will again be enthusiastic supporters of your efforts to pass a new Council resolution that will be even stronger than resolution 1460 (2003), a resolution that, in the words of Olara Otunnu this morning, will, hopefully, serve as "triggers for action".

We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy, for their opening remarks and the work they have done so far to advance the protection of children associated with armed conflict. The cooperation between UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General was excellent on the child protection component of the United Nations mission to Liberia, and we hope that this will serve as a model for future cooperation.

I would also like to state that Germany fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered by Ambassador Ryan of Ireland, on behalf of the European Union, later in this discussion.

In January of last year, adopted a resolution that was widely seen as a sign of hope for the hundreds of thousands of child soldiers and many more children victimized by armed conflict, because the Council had gone further than ever before, not only in condemning outrages against children but also in taking tangible action against these crimes.

One year later, we feel a mixture of hope and frustration. On the positive side, we see some encouraging action within the United Nations system and by non-governmental organizations to use resolution 1460 (2003) as a strong advocacy tool. On the other hand, we see little overall improvement on the ground. Instances where there was some positive development — for example, in Sri Lanka — are rare. And there are the many instances where there was no positive development at all, or even a worsening of the situation, for example in northern Uganda, in Ituri in north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in Myanmar.

On a more hopeful note, we are starting to see a positive impact from the threat of prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC). In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, this possibility is becoming more and more widely known. We are convinced that the ICC is, even now, exerting its much-desired preventive influence, and we are equally convinced that it will play a highly important role in ending the culture of impunity. However, this must not stop the Council from using its own powers to hold accountable those responsible for the gravest crimes and human rights violations.

The Council has now arrived at a crossroads; we now have to decide whether we want to continue to appeal, condemn and entreat, or to act. We strongly advocate for the latter option. We must not allow this debate to become an annual ritual of hand-wringing indignation without measurable effect.

Many excellent recommendations have been made by the Secretary-General and by many non-governmental organizations. These range from more systematic monitoring and reporting, to curbing the flow of small arms and the illicit exploitation of natural resources, to more child-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programming.

We would like to focus on the following key issues, which should also be important elements of the draft resolution we will hopefully adopt shortly.

First, we must reinforce the Council's message to unresponsive parties to conflicts that they have to meet their obligations. We should set clear time limits for action plans for demobilization and child protection.

Secondly, we must take action that makes it clearer who is in charge of what within the United Nations system. United Nations action must be made more cohesive. In concrete terms, we support the suggestion to appoint a United Nations focal point at the country level to make clear to all actors in the field who is responsible. We also support changes at Headquarters that ensure that this agenda becomes a true joint effort. We are looking forward to the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations response to this issue.

Thirdly, conflict parties that do respond positively should be rewarded with technical and other assistance. Conflict parties that do not comply, however, should be penalized. Such measures, both positive and negative, must be targeted. We strongly support the Secretary-General's recommendations, inter alia, on travel restrictions, restrictions on the supply of arms and on other military assistance. We know that targeted measures are a highly complex and politically charged issue. However, we should not continue to treat this as a taboo subject in the Council. Otherwise, we will never be able to arrive at a methodology that excludes exactly those feared side-effects that lead sceptics in the Council to oppose them in the first place. And let me address myself to my more sceptical colleagues: Let us not forget what we are addressing here. We are facing some of the most vicious crimes imaginable, committed on a large scale.

Fourthly, the Council should enhance its efforts to integrate child-protection issues into its deliberations on concrete conflict situations. There is no conflict that does not affect children. Therefore, every conflict on the Council's agenda should be examined from a child-rights perspective. For instance, when a peace mission is established, we should ask ourselves: What are the requirements for child protection? Do we need child-protection advisers? What are the requirements for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement programmes from a child-protection perspective? What are the special needs of girls? The Council has been making progress here, but our job of mainstreaming is far from complete.

Lastly, we continue to need a list of violators annexed to the Secretary-General's report to the Council. We also believe that the call for an extension of this list to other egregious violations is justified. Let me make one point to illustrate this. One of the most shocking developments in recent conflicts is the appalling prevalence of sexual violence, as so vividly described by Carol Bellamy just this morning. Systematic rape as a weapon of war, often combined with murder and mutilation, as well as contemporary forms of slavery — especially the abduction of children as sex slaves — are not covered by the current list. The vast majority of victims of these crimes are girls. An extension of the list to other violations would not only give us a more accurate picture, but would also help to heighten our awareness of the gender aspects of this issue.

Although it is not easy in this context, let me end on a positive note. Despite all the obstacles, Germany does believe that the Council can make a real difference. The Council is united in its condemnation of the illegal recruitment of children and the unspeakable acts committed against them in armed conflict. Very importantly, we are being supported by a number of first-class non-governmental organizations, in particular the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. In addition, we are being supported by highly committed individuals in the United Nations system. In short, we have reached a critical mass and can now really move things forward. Let us seize this opportunity together.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Germany for his kind words addressed to me and to the presidency.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to welcome you to New York, Madame, to preside personally over today's meeting. Your presence fully demonstrates the great importance which your country, Chile, and you yourself attach to the issue of children and armed conflict. Your commitment will undoubtedly play a very important role in the efforts of the Security Council, the United Nations and all countries.

I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict, as well as Special Representative Otunnu and Carol Bellamy for their briefings. They have made most valuable

recommendations that merit the Council's attentive consideration.

There is a common understanding that children represent the future of the world. We are duty-bound to create the best and most conducive conditions in which they may live, study, develop, grow and succeed. Regrettably, however, millions of children in today's world continue to suffer the damage caused by armed conflict. They live through turbulence and backwardness, they witness violence and destruction, they suffer abuse and injury, and they inherit tragedy and helplessness.

It is therefore a most important duty of the international community to protect children from the damage of armed conflict and all countries, especially parties to conflicts, should make every effort to that end. We are very pleased to note that, in recent years, the United Nations has adopted a series of measures to protect children in armed conflict and achieved positive results. The Security Council has adopted resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003), which provide a very important legal framework for the work of child protection. United Nations peacekeeping operations in certain areas have mandated child protection — including the appointment of child protection advisers and the recognition of the special needs of children — as a key task in assisting the countries where they are deployed to carry out disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement programmes. Some peace agreements promoted by or achieved with the assistance of the United Nations also contain child-protection provisions. All such measures have, to a certain extent, mitigated the harm caused by armed conflict to children and should therefore be welcomed.

Although the international community has attached growing importance in recent years to the protection of children in armed conflict and has achieved progress on this issue, we must and can make genuine efforts to effect real change in the situation. In this context, I wish to stress the following points.

First, all parties to armed conflict should implement in good faith their obligations under relevant international law in order to safeguard the rights of children. All those who have participated in killing, abducting or abusing children should be severely punished according to the law. The coercive recruitment and deployment of child soldiers must be stopped.

Secondly, in post-conflict countries and regions, the authorities concerned must solve the problem of returning children to their families, schools and society as a matter of priority and provide adequate and guaranteed resources to that end. The international community should also actively provide assistance to that end.

Thirdly, the Security Council should continue to intensify its efforts to prevent and put an end to conflict, in keeping with its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The relevant departments within the United Nations should, in a timely manner, provide an overview of successful experiences in protecting children in peacekeeping operations for use in future operations.

China believes that the United Nations should play an active role in protecting children in armed conflict. We agree that the United Nations and the relevant regional organizations and agencies of the United Nations system should intensify their cooperation and coordination efforts with a view to adopting an integrated strategy so that, working together, they can help countries in conflict to enhance their ability to protect children.

China will continue to work together with the international community to promote the cause of the protection of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Chile.

I would like to thank representatives for their kind expressions of support addressed to the presidency. My presence in this Chamber attests to the priority that Chile attaches to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, both male and female, in armed conflict.

We associate ourselves with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Mali, which holds the chairmanship of the Human Security Network, of which Chile, together with 12 other countries, is a member.

It is hard to imagine that more than 300,000 boys and girls are still participating in armed conflict in various regions of the world. That is a fundamental

challenge to the values that should govern the world. It is our responsibility to continue to work for the restoration of human dignity and to take the necessary measures for the immediate demobilization, rehabilitation and reinsertion of those boys and girls. That is a task to be carried out jointly by Governments, the United Nations system and civil society.

This is why we attach particular importance to the report of the Secretary-General. We welcome his recommendations and firmly support the appeals for action made by his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Carol Bellamy.

The Security Council acknowledged its responsibility when, in 1998, it included this item on its agenda. As the Secretary-General has said, the time has come for the implementation of international instruments and resolutions to protect children.

We also have a responsibility to expand the concept of early warning so as to identify situations that threaten international peace and security. Our challenge is to act before, during and after conflict. We must commit ourselves to the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council in recent years.

We believe that, if we are to succeed in ensuring the full implementation of the legal framework to protect children in armed conflict, we must seek out and develop effective monitoring and information mechanisms that enable us to oversee such implementation in a more systematic manner.

In this context, it may be useful to recall the proposal that we made in the context of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. We suggested that every year a member of the Council should be requested to monitor, together with the relevant departments of the Secretariat, the implementation of our decisions. A similar initiative was suggested by some non-governmental organizations during the recent Arria-formula meeting in relation to children in armed conflict.

In the context of our monitoring efforts, the identification of parties to conflict that recruit or use children should be kept under constant review. We must also consider monitoring other forms of violation and abuse of children.

After the parties that perpetrate such abuses have been identified, it will then be time to begin work on the nature of the measures or sanctions to be imposed on them, particularly in the case of repeat offenders in the use or recruitment of children as soldiers.

We are convinced that education is one of the key instruments for promoting lasting protection for children — a conviction that is shared by the members of the Human Security Network.

We must design and implement policies and programmes geared towards both the therapeutic healing of the physical and psychological damage done to children who have been abused and the restoration of the rights that were violated in situations of war and armed conflict.

I invite representatives to expand the global movement seeking to ensure that the rights of children in armed conflicts are included, as a matter of priority, on the international security agenda and in development policies at both the national and international levels.

Specifically, my country proposes that we concentrate on the following areas: first, the establishment of a structured monitoring and information mechanism; secondly, the adoption of specific measures aimed at violator countries, as well as repeat offenders; thirdly, the inclusion in our future work of other serious violations; and fourthly, an emphasis on educational policies to facilitate reintegration into society.

I wish to conclude, as earlier speakers have done, by recalling the words of Graça Machel, who appealed to us to take advantage of this and every opportunity to transform our moral outrage into proactive strategies for change. Let us fulfil our obligations to ourselves and to the future: our children — our boys and girls — who have the right to enjoy peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Colombia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Giraldo (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express our appreciation to you, Madam, for having honoured us by presiding over this Security Council meeting. We would also like to thank

Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

In expressing gratitude to the mission of Chile for having organized this debate, and to the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict, my delegation would like to share the experiences of our country and our Government in the difficult task of protecting Colombian children, who have been murdered, kidnapped, mutilated, displaced or recruited by the illegal armed groups that operate in the country.

Allow me to begin with what I consider an absolutely key priority. While it is true that all violations against children's rights must be singled out for repudiation, it is important to bear in mind that, in situations of armed conflict, the worst, most systematic and extensive violations of those rights — those with the most profound effects — are perpetrated by illegal armed groups that recruit child soldiers.

Child soldiers, because of their status, are in particular danger of being killed, tortured or mutilated — in short, mistreated in every way. Their rights and freedoms are severely restricted, as is their ability to develop their personalities. They are taken away from their families and become victims of sexual abuse.

That is why the United Nations, the Council, the Secretary-General and all of us here should be more explicit in condemning these practices. Drawing up lists on an annual basis, disseminating them and sharing them among all the Members of the United Nations — so as to ensure that everyone bears these facts very much in mind when having any kind of contact with these types of groups, or when receiving them on their territory — would be one way of exerting moral and global pressure, so that such groups might begin to believe it necessary to put an end to these practices.

The Secretary-General's report indicates that 7,000 Colombian children have been recruited by illegal armed groups — that is to say, one of every four irregular combatants in Colombia is under 18. According to estimates by Colombian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 80 per cent of the children in question belong to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) or to the National Liberation Army (ELN). Thirty-five per cent of the children recruited — most of them by force — desert before a year is up. Many have been executed when trying to escape by their own friends, who are also children.

The extreme gravity of the situation is reflected in a Human Rights Watch report which recalls the sad and horrifying testimony of a girl child soldier talking about the execution of her best friend when he tried to escape:

> "I cannot forget Luis; he was my friend. I voted for his execution so the others would not think that I had a chicken's heart."

Concerning the behaviour of these illegal armed groups, Human Rights Watch stresses that, first, they train the children to have no mercy; secondly, they torture and summarily execute children for not doing the work required of them; and, thirdly, they induce children to take part in atrocities. One tragic example is that of a boy, only 10 years old, used by the FARC to deliver a bomb. He was killed on 17 April 2003, when the bicycle he was riding exploded.

But the acts of terror perpetrated by Colombian irregular armed groups against children in my country is not limited to recruiting child soldiers and executing them if they try to escape, nor to sacrificing them in the perpetration of terrorist acts. As the Secretary-General's report states,

> "In Colombia, the Ejercito de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) have kidnapped hundreds of children for ransom and as a means of terrorizing civilian populations; 215 children were kidnapped in 2002 and another 112 during the first half of 2003." (*S/2003/1053, para. 34*)

According to State statistics, between 1996 and 2003, 1,819 children aged 13 to 17 were kidnapped. According to some statistics, every 37 hours in Colombia a child is kidnapped by an illegal armed group. The Secretary-General also reports in paragraph 44 of his report that "in Colombia, about 40 per cent of mine victims from 1990 to 2003 were children".

Furthermore, with reference to illegal armed groups, the Secretary-General notes in paragraph 55 that "fear of recruitment has led many families to flee their homes in rural areas". According to official Colombian Government data, 58 per cent of displaced persons are children and women. Many of those children end up in cities as street children and are

sometimes the victims of arbitrary killings. In this regard, we would like to know the sources consulted that allow the Secretary-General to affirm in paragraph 25 of his report that there has been an increase in the number of arbitrary killings of street children. Indeed, we have statistics to the contrary, given that the combat against these heinous crimes has been one of the priorities of my country's national and local authorities.

I did not come here only to comment and expand on the denunciations in the Secretary-General's report of all the atrocities committed against Colombian children by the irregular armed groups operating in my country. I am also here to inform the Council about our commitment and the results of the democratic security policy of our Government to protect the human rights of all Colombians, and in particular those of our children.

The incidence of homicide, kidnapping and displacement has begun to decrease, and there has been an important increase in the number of desertions by persons linked to illegal armed groups, especially minors. In 2003, 64 per cent of the demobilized were between 14 and 24.

Since 1999, the Colombian State has been complying with its international commitments not to recruit children under the age of 18. Colombia therefore would request institutions and entities with the required influence — such as the Security Council, regional organizations and States — to exert gradual and targeted pressure on those armed groups that continue to violate the rights of Colombian children.

Perhaps the Colombian children who, in an environment of violence, had the courage to create the "Children's Movement for Peace in Colombia", as well as those children worldwide whose rights have been violated, could serve as examples of the courage that we all must have if we are to rescue them from the hell they are experiencing at the hands of violent groups.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Colombia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Myanmar, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): I wish to thank you, Madam President, for having convened this event and for the opportunity to participate in it. I wish also to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy for their presentations.

The last five years have seen significant gains in the protection of children affected by armed conflict, with milestone achievements in the area of awareness and advocacy as well as in the strengthening of international norms and standards.

Children have now been placed solidly on the international peace and security agenda. However, the report also shows that children continue to be the main victims of conflict.

My delegation has always held the view that the best way of protecting children in armed conflict lies in the promotion of conflict prevention and resolution. In conditions of armed conflict, it is the most vulnerable in a society that suffer — that is to say, women and children.

My country, since its independence in 1948, has suffered from civil insurgency. It is only recently that the country was able to enjoy the fruits of peace and stability. Until recently, there were 18 armed insurgent groups, of which 17 have now come back to the legal fold. Only one insurgent group — the Karen National Union (KNU) — remains outside the fold. I am happy to tell the Council that the Government has been successfully carrying out confidence-building measures with this remaining group. Guns have now fallen silent throughout the Union of Myanmar.

The issue of children and armed conflict is one that demands the undivided attention of the international community. It is an issue on which all of us must cooperate and work together to alleviate the tragic plight of children everywhere.

During the public meeting last year one Security Council member stressed the need for verification and for checking the validity of information before it is presented to the Security Council, as have many speakers during today's debate. My delegation also stated that the issue of the protection of children should not be politicized. Despite that, I have noted that the Secretary-General's report has taken as facts allegations made regarding my country by certain quarters to put political pressure on Myanmar.

We take the issue of the protection of children very seriously, and I personally have been in contact with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, in this regard. I am

personally thankful to Mr. Otunnu for the useful interaction with him regarding this issue. I was also given to understand that the preparation of the report as far as Myanmar was concerned was very political and that the discussions were sometimes even acrimonious. Last year, a number of non-governmental organizations exerted tremendous pressure to include Myanmar on the annex list. At that time, the Secretary-General, guided by resolution 1379 (2001), resisted the attempt.

However, we regret that in preparing this year's report, although it was prepared under the same guidelines, a second annex was created, and that Tatmadaw Kyi — the Myanmar army — was included in annex II. It must be noted here that Myanmar is not a country in armed conflict. The report, without checking or verification, used second-hand information provided by politically motivated non-governmental organizations to include Tatmadaw Kyi in the list. The preposterous allegation of 70,000 child soldiers made against us is the result of interviewing 20 or so insurgents and dubious deserters inside a neighbouring country. No United Nations agency — I repeat: no United Nations agency — in Myanmar has verified this allegation. As is widely known, and as is testified to by the Special Rapporteur on human rights, it is the practice of insurgent groups to recruit and use child soldiers.

May I reiterate once again that the Myanmar armed forces, including Tatmadaw Kyi, is an all-volunteer army, and those entering military service do so of their own free will. Under the Myanmar Defence Services Act and War Office Council instruction 13/73 of 1974, a person cannot enlist in the armed forces until he has attained the age of 18. There is neither a draft system nor forced conscription by the Government of Myanmar. Forced conscription in any form is strictly prohibited. And in order to ensure the voluntary nature of recruitment, as well as the minimum age requirement, the Ministry of Defence has followed up with periodic instructions. Those who are found to have contravened those instructions have had action taken against them under military law. We have instituted scrutiny and inspection procedures and have demobilized those military personnel who do not conform to minimum age requirements or other qualifications.

To further strengthen effective implementation, a committee for the prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers has been recently established, chaired by the Second Secretary of the State Peace and Development Council, Lieutenant General Thein Sein. The committee also decided to set up a task force comprising representatives from relevant ministries. In order to more effectively address the issue, the Committee will also draw up a plan of action. Necessary procedures to be followed for preventing all recruitment of under-age children are already in place.

Myanmar shares the view of the rest of the international community on the need to protect children, particularly in situations of armed conflict. We are also of the view that the promotion of all human rights, including the rights of children, should be conducted through cooperation. We have therefore invited the Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to visit Myanmar at a mutually convenient time, and the Special Representative has indicated his intention to visit Myanmar in early 2004. We are now waiting for him to propose the actual dates. We have also indicated our willingness to cooperate with UNICEF to its representative in Myanmar.

With the attainment of peace and stability, the Government has been able to bring considerable economic and social development to the country, in particular to the inhabitants of the border areas, which until recently had been under the control of the insurgents. Children in those areas are now provided with the health and education services that are enjoyed by their brethren in other parts of the country. Nationally, we will continue to promote the well-being of children and provide them with a secure and enabling environment in which they can develop their full potential. We are also resolved to join hands with others in the international community to promote the rights of children the world over.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kulyk (Ukraine): At the outset, Madam, I would like to express appreciation for the excellent manner in which you are presiding over the work of the Security Council. Let me thank you and the delegation of Chile for convening this important meeting.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his substantive report (S/2003/1053). Ukraine also congratulates his Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Carol Bellamy, on their tremendous work in the interest of children.

Since the first consideration of this issue by the Security Council with the participation of Ukraine, in 1998, we have made certain progress in this field. Four Security Council resolutions formed a strong basis for advocacy on behalf of war-affected children. The scope of international instruments has been strengthened and expanded. Among them is the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I am pleased to inform the Council that two weeks ago the President of Ukraine submitted the Optional Protocol to the Ukrainian parliament for ratification.

However, success in standard-setting must not be cause for complacency — quite the contrary. While the existing standards are high, the picture continues to be very grim when it comes to implementation on the ground.

Ukraine reiterates its support for the Security Council's efforts to reinforce the protection of children. We emphasize the innovative contribution that resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003) represent, particularly the publication of a list of parties to armed conflicts that recruit or use children in violation of international law. The political importance of this list is undeniable, and it should certainly be maintained. However, its true value will become apparent only when the Security Council defines the actions it needs to undertake in that respect. We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to the Council to take concrete steps where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties in implementing resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003).

As we see from the report, the list of Governments and armed groups using children in armed conflicts has now become much longer than it was a year ago, and the assessment of progress made by those parties during the same year is very modest. Frankly speaking, I am not sure that every group named in the list has been made aware of the fact of its publication.

It is incumbent upon all of us to move away from general statements to specific action and to build a system of accountability that cannot be ignored. In that regard, as Mr. Otunnu rightly pointed out, we need a systematic, integrated and concerted monitoring and reporting mechanism to provide timely and accurate information on violations of the rights of children in armed conflicts.

Who should undertake this monitoring and reporting? In our opinion, it should be a network of actors, each of whom would bring the added value represented by their respective areas of jurisdiction, competence and expertise. Those actors include the Security Council, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams and other United Nations agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations. I believe we can create a global culture that will hold anyone to account who uses or abuses children or destroys them and their innocence, as one would hold anyone to account who uses weapons of mass destruction.

Peacekeeping missions have a crucial role to play in providing protection for children. Ukraine continues to advocate the deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions in order to effectively integrate the rights, protection and well-being of children into peacekeeping and peace-building processes. We especially appreciate the fact that child protection advisers are already being deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Angola. In addition, the training of both military and civilian peacekeeping personnel in child protection and children's rights should be undertaken in every peacekeeping mission.

When designing peacekeeping operations, the Security Council should make every effort to protect both children and their supporting environment: schools, hospitals, health centres and religious institutions. Once child soldiers have been rescued from armed groups, they should not be left alone to survive in circumstances socially and economically devastated by war. Their sustainable rehabilitation will require coordinated efforts and resources from the United Nations system and the rest of the international community.

We must make a better effort to assist those children who have been orphaned, made homeless, handicapped, traumatized, deprived of education or abused in countless other ways by war. It is also important to focus on children in post-conflict reconciliation programmes. There is an urgent need for the international community to support programmes — including advocacy and social services — for the demobilization and community reintegration of child soldiers. Such children should be offered new

experiences that will change their identity from that of soldiers. Education and training remain fundamental to that end; they will not only help children avoid participating in conflicts, but will also build an educated society in post-conflict countries and promote their development.

In conclusion, I wish to express the hope that this debate — and the forthcoming draft resolution initiated by the French delegation — will set out an important agenda and a basis for the future work of the Council and that of other United Nations bodies. They must undertake joint actions not only to curtail the abuse of children, but also to protect those who have yet to face the world from losing their childhood and their dreams before they have the opportunity to truly come to life.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In view of the lateness of the hour, and bearing in mind that there are still a number of speakers invited under rule 37 remaining on my list, I intend, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3.15 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.25 p.m.